

7-day Southwestern Montana Tour

This itinerary describes the "car-camping" tour. If you choose to join a tour that provides hotels/cabins, the stops and locations are approximately the same. We recommend the camping tour because we will see more birds and wildlife while staying at the campgrounds. We have wonderfully comfortable tents and sleeping pads.

Day 0, Missoula: You will need to arrive in Missoula the night before the tour starts. You are responsible for booking and paying for your hotel in Missoula. We recommend staying near the airport. The elevation of Missoula is 3,209 feet.

Day 1, Black Sandy: Tour begins with pick up at your hotel in Missoula. From Missoula we will travel 135 miles to our campground at Black Sandy where we will spend 2-nights. There will be numerous stops along the way, for birding and wildlife viewing and will arrive at the campground in the late afternoon. Black Sandy State Park is located just outside of Helena, on the western shore of Hauser Lake which is created from the Missouri River. The park is along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Day 2, Black Sandy: We will spend the day birding various locations along the Missouri River and sites at the edge of the mountains for higher elevation birds. The Missouri River provides great habitats for birds and wildlife. The elevation of the Helena area is 3,875 feet.

Day 3, Lewis and Clark Caverns: From Black Sandy it is an 85-mile drive to our next camp area at the Lewis and Clark Caverns. We will take the scenic route, following the Missouri River for the best birding locations. The park is 3,000-acres and one of the most decorated and largest limestone caverns in the Northwestern United States. We will camp here for 2-nights, just outside of the town of Cardwell and the elevation of this area is 5,300 feet.

Day 4, Lewis and Clark Caverns: The morning will be spent birding riparian areas along the Jefferson River. Guided tours of the caverns are available from May 1st - September 30th. In the afternoon, we will travel to locations in the surrounding mountains for higher elevation habitats for birding.

Day 5, Bannack: In the morning we will bird the riparian areas along the Jefferson River. From our camp area, it is 95 miles to the next location at Bannack State Park. We will travel through the historic towns of Silver City and Two Bridges, making stops along the Jefferson River Valley for birding. Bannack is a ghost town located along Grasshopper Creek, where the creek joins with the Beaverhead River south of Dillon. Founded in 1862, the town operates as a National Historic Landmark. This "Old West" town was the site of Montana's first major gold discovery in 1862 and Montana's first territorial capital.

Day 6, Bannack: The elevation of Bannock is 5,837 feet and it is centrally located among numerous excellent birding areas, including the Clark Canyon Reservoir and locations in the Dillon area.

Day 7, Drop off in Missoula: From Bannack, it is a 2-hour (120 miles) to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site at Deer Lodge. In this area there are

several good birding sites. From Deer Lodge it is 1.5-hour drive (80 miles) back to Missoula, where you will be dropped off at your hotel.

Details

- **Travel Dates:** By request or join an already scheduled trip
- **Group size:** 2 - 4, plus guide
- **Trip Length:** 7 days (6 nights)
- **Included:** Lodging, camping gear: Tents, sleeping bags and sleeping pads. All cooking supplies: Stove, fuel, pots, pans, plates, bowls, cups, utensils, etc. Food: Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Drinks: Water, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, hot cider, juice, soda.
- **Not included:** Airfare to Missoula (MSO), snacks in between meals

Price: 7-day "car-camping" tour at state park and national park campgrounds is \$1,995 per person (based on double occupancy). 7-day birding tour at hotels/cabins is \$2,555 per person (based on double occupancy). Please contact us for solo traveler rate.

Lodging: If you choose a tour with hotels/cabins, the lodging is basic, not fancy and is located near the campground that is mentioned in the itinerary.

Gear you need to bring: Outdoor clothes including hiking boots, rain jacket and pants and warm clothes, including hats and gloves. The mountains can be cold, even in the summer. Everyone should have their own head lamp and/or flashlight, refillable water bottle, day pack for hiking and a personal small emergency kit.

Campfires: Most all locations permit campfires (when there is not a fire ban), and we will have a campfire and if you like, we can have s'mores and sometimes cook hot dogs over the fire.

Showers: There are pay showers at most all the campgrounds.